PITTA

Newsletter of Deccan Birders (formerly Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh)
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Editor's note

Some of our members had been to Gujarat for a week-long birding trip from February 5th to 10th, 2020. In this Special Issue of the Pitta, we are happy to bring you an account of the trip, along with a number of colourful photographs. We hope you will find this Special Issue interesting.

WESTERN WANDERINGS
Report: Gujarat, February 5-10, 2020

A view of Great Rann of Kutch (Photo: Prashant Yella)

Day-1: Nalsarovar, February 5, 2020

Dr Jayati Mitra

We were a group of five members of Deccan Birders waiting at the Ahmedabad airport on a bright and sunny morning on February 5, 2020. Our final destination was the Great Rann of Kutch, but we had a stopover for more than half a day at this city. Our trip coordinator Umesh came up with the idea of taking us for a meticulously planned birding trip to Nalsarovar, a vast wetland lying near Sanand village about 60km from Ahmedabad city.

The shallow lake, about 120.8 square kilometers in area and four to five feet deep, is dotted with around 36 small islands. The presence of a rich variety of birds consistently in the past in this location has been noted by ornithologists and it has been declared as a Ramsar site since September 24, 2012.

It was almost noon when we reached the periphery of the sanctuary. Our country has a great variety of landscapes and this western region is known for its dry deserts and thorny shrubs.

On the way, the common bird species seen were mostly Bank Mynas, Eurasian Collared Doves, Green Bee-eaters, Black Drongos and House Sparrows. We also spotted the White-eared Bulbul, conspicuous with its yellow vent, as it is a common species of the western plains of our country.

White-eared Bulbul (Photo: Umesh Mani)

After a long drive we reached a prominent carrefour before the entrance to the sanctuary. The weather was becoming increasingly hot and dry as the day progressed, but we had ample quantities of juicy apples to quench our thirst, thanks to our friend Shalini who had thoughtfully packed them for us during the journey. Our first halt was a small pond near the roadside where we noticed some waders, the most significant of them being the near-threatened Curlew Sandpiper and the Dunlin. Some other birds present were Common Sandpiper, Painted Stork, Asian Openbill, Red-naped and Black-headed Ibis.

Dunlin (Photo: Umesh Mani)

As we had limited time we decided not to visit the main water body but to bird only at selected locations on the fringes of the sanctuary. The electrical wires served as suitable perching sites for quite a few birds in the absence of tall trees. We observed the Long-tailed Shrike, Southern Grey Shrike, Indian Roller and Common Kestrel, all perched high up, waiting to catch their prey.

At about 12.30PM, our guide made a stop at a small patch of marsh surrounded by reeds, which seemed to be a favourable site for water birds. Silently all of us crouched and leaned over the stones at the edge of the patch to look for the presence of any creature amidst the thick vegetation. Occasionally a Siberian Stonechat or a Warbler diverted our attention till we heard a crackling call.

Ruddy-breasted Crake (Photo: Umesh Mani)

A Ruddy-breasted Crake peeped out into the open area and disappeared in no time, but we didn't lose our patience. It showed up again, wading across the water with its long toes, head bent down in a slightly stooping posture but this time it started feeding comfortably in the centre of the marsh, oblivious of our presence. We had ample time to enjoy viewing its glossy reddish-brown plumage. After it left came the Baillon's Crake, a pretty bird with a much brighter brown colour and white streaking on its back.

Baillon's Crake (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Finally the highlight of the day – a beautiful Spotted Crake – appeared and scurried to the middle, moving back and forth repeatedly as it fed. It had a light coloured breast and white spots all over its light brown plumage with a buffy undertail. I couldn't help admiring its yellow beak with the bright red spot.

Spotted Crake (Photo: Umesh Mani)

All this happened within a few minutes but it was a great opportunity to record the activities of these very shy birds at such close quarters in my mind's eye. Viewing all the three Crakes together was a great moment in my life and, while I was fully engrossed in watching these beautiful creations of nature, a pair of Collared Pratincoles appeared in the sky. They had pointed brown wings with a whitish underbelly and, while flying and circling overhead, they were feeding on insects before disappearing out of view.

Collared Pratincole (Photo: Umesh Mani)

After this birding bonanza we moved out from the main road into the interior region. Among the raptors, we could sight an occasional Oriental Honey-buzzard or a Eurasian Marsh Harrier and even a Shikra in flight. Our vehicle made way to some extent through the loose dry soil of the uneven undulating path, kicking up clouds of dust, while scraping through thorny Acacia and other scrub species which obstructed our way. Finally, we got down and trekked through this very dry, vast terrain which was mostly barren other than for a few clumps of dwarf bushes growing haphazardly all over. Here it was actually possible to gaze all around in a full circle till the horizon!

Short-eared Owl (Photo: Umesh Mani)

In this open environment, we soon noticed a Short-eared Owl. This bird hunts during the daytime also and though we were very far away it could still feel our presence and it cleverly dodged us every time we tried to approach it. Finally we could locate it beneath a bush and got a glimpse of it from a safe distance. Another special species of this region, the Stoliczka's Bushchat, also showed up for a while in the distance. Unfortunately, all I saw was a small brown bird with some streaks on its head and back, before it disappeared.

White-tailed Lapwing (Photo: Umesh Mani)

While returning from this spot we came across another good finding in a shallow stretch of water – two White-tailed Lapwings! It was a very graceful slim grey-brown bird with long yellow legs, whitish face and a white tail. It migrates thousands of kilometers from Central Europe to spend the winter here.

Some time later, we were fortunate enough to see a whole flock of another highly sought-after species – the Sociable Lapwing. This is a critically endangered bird which has got its name from gathering in large flocks. The bird is olive brown in colour, with a bold white supercilium bordered by a dark eye stripe and crown. It is known to breed in grasslands of European steppes, where cattle grazing and agriculture in the same area is ruining its habitat; at the same time, it is often hunted on its migratory route over central Europe.

Sociable Lapwing (Photo: Umesh Mani)

There were quite a few Ruff feeding along with the Sociable Lapwings. These are also winter visitors to our country. After a while we watched the entire flock flying together gracefully for a short period and ultimately diving down to rest again a little further away from the previous position. This type of visual treat of a flock in flight is always cherished by a bird watcher.

Jungle Cat (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Quite a number of Demoiselle Cranes were sighted on the way but our main interest was to look for the Sarus. As we tried to focus on the Cranes, we saw a Jungle Cat scurrying across the fields. It kept moving away, maintaining some distance and hiding itself among the crops growing in the fields.

Sarus Crane adult (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Sarus Crane juvenile (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Coming back to the Sarus, this resident bird of our country pairs for life and we could observe a pair fanning their wings and swaying their bright red heads from time to time. A couple of juveniles also were present; they lacked the bright red head colour of a mature adult. They were feeding in the paddy fields and one of them was trying to gobble up a frog for its evening meal. Another vulnerable species, the Woolly-necked Stork was also present nearby, feeding in the same field.

Woolly-necked Stork (Photo: Umesh Mani)

It was evening by now and light was fast fading away. We watched the sun set below the horizon and as darkness set in, it was time to head back towards Ahmedabad city. After this excellent birding trip we went for dinner at a city hotel and ended up tasting a bizarre variety of Chopsuey with pineapple!

Every journey throws up a surprise and we accepted this one also with great moments of enjoyment and learning. This trip was a great beginning and it had greatly heightened our expectations for the coming days. We were all very excited and ready for the night journey to reach Bhuj the next morning and explore other birding areas in Kutch.

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Day-1: Thol Lake Bird Sanctuary, February 5, 2020

G Ramakrishna Rao

Demoiselle Crane (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

Arriving early on February 5, 2020 in Ahmedabad for our trip to Great Rann of Kutch, Vikramjit and I, instead of accompanying the rest of the group to Nalsarovar, decided to use the time and go to Thol Bird Sanctuary. We hired a taxi from Ahmedabad and spent around half a day at Thol. Our decision paid off, as we got to see a good number of water birds from fairly close. Some interesting sightings were a large flock of Demoiselle Cranes, a Darter sunning itself and an Osprey on the hunt.

Darter (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

Osprey (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

Thol Bird Sanctuary is situated in Mehsana District of Gujarat and lies between 23.15 to 23.30'N latitude and 72.30 to 72.45'E longitude. It is a shallow water reservoir situated 25 km north-west of Ahmedabad. Thol water body occupies a total area of 6.99 sq km and its periphery is 5.62 km long. Its canals, distributaries and sub-distributaries are about 20 km long, and have a catchment of 320 sq km in surrounding villages.

Jungle Babbler (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

The important plant species are Gum Arabic (*Acacia nilotica*), Umbrella Thorn (*A. planifrons*), Indian Jujube (*Ziziphus mauritiana*), Jhar Beri (*Z. nummularia*), Neem (*Azadirachta indica*), Jungli Kikar (*Prosopis juliflora*), Assyrian Plum (*Cordia myxa*) and Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus excelsa*).

Submerged rooted aquatic vegetation in Thol water body are Tape Grass or Eel Grass (*Vallisneria spiralis*), Waterthyme (*Hydrilla verticillata*), Pondweed (*Potamogeton sp.*), Yellow Lotus (*Nelumbo lutea*), Water Morning Glory (*Ipomoea aquatica*), Narrowleaf Cattail (*Typha angustata*) and some floating perennial grass (*Paspalum sp.*).

The grass species are Bermuda Grass or Dog's Tooth Grass (*Cynodon dactylon*), Canegrass or Lovegrass (*Eragrostis sp.*), Sedge (*Cyperus sp.*) and Broomsedge (*Saccharum sp.*).

We saw many Nilgais and Common Langurs in the Thol tank area. There were some Warblers, Prinias and Flycatchers that I could not identify on the spot, but they were identified from photos later and added to the list.

Thol Sanctuary has sufficient tree growth of Prosopis along with adequate undisturbed tank foreshore, and is a good area for the breeding of migratory birds. We saw good numbers of Greylag Geese and Bar-headed Geese.

Greylag Goose (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

Black-winged Stilt & Bar-headed Goose
(Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

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Day-2: Banni Grasslands, Great Rann of Kutch, February 6, 2020

Prashant Yella

The Deccan Birders' trip to Great Rann of Kutch was my first visit to the state of Gujarat. As I landed in Ahmedabad on the 5th of February, I remember being really stoked about getting a chance to capture the stunning landscapes of the region, and about witnessing some of the iconic raptors that have been on my bucket list for some time now.

Cottages at the homestay (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

We reached the homestay on the morning of February 6th after an overnight journey from Ahmedabad. Located just outside Lodai village, the camp was setup in a tranquil location surrounded by hills and a lake. After we checked in to our respective cottages, I found myself trying to unpack as quickly as possible in order to get my gear ready and charge an extra set of batteries for the day.

Later, over a cup of tea we were introduced to the guides and caretakers of the camp. We buckled up in the vehicles assigned to us and headed out to Banni Grasslands.

An arid part of Banni Grasslands (Photo: Prashant Yella)

The Banni Grasslands are an arid ecosystem belt on the southern edge of the desert of the Great Rann of Kutch. The land here was formed from the sediments that were deposited by the Indus and other rivers over thousands of years.

Desert Wheatear (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

The first sightings of the day included Red Collared Doves, Rosy Starlings, Green Bee-eaters, Desert Wheatear and an Oriental Honey-buzzard. On entering the grassland area, we made a stop and huddled around for a wholesome Gujarati breakfast organized by our guide. We then took a quick look around on foot and got a chance to closely observe the soil and vegetation. We then resumed birding from our respective vehicles, which shielded us from the harsh midday sun. We spotted some winter visitors like Pallid Harrier, Isabelline Wheatear, Eurasian Spoonbill, and Cream-colored Courser.

Isabelline Wheatear (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

Cream-coloured Courser (Photo: Umesh Mani)

We also saw some horses in the distance.

A herd of horses (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Another special sighting of the session was the Jack Snipe. It was so well-camouflaged that even from a distance of barely 6-7 feet, it was difficult to locate it!

Jack Snipe (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Driving on, we came across a small patch of water near a culvert that had a good number of birds.

Spotted Redshank (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

Laughing Dove (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

We headed back to the homestay for lunch but did not really take a break from birding. Many of us were kept busy by the bustling of House Sparrows, Red-vented Bulbuls and Laughing Doves around the bird feeders that were set up at the homestay.

House Sparrow (Photo: Umesh Mani)

During this break, my father photographed a Grey-necked Bunting near the camp, which caused great excitement. We also saw an Orphean Warbler close to the lunch area.

Grey-necked Bunting (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Orphean Warbler (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Small Orange Tip (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Bumblebee on Milkweed (aka Calotropis)
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Post lunch, we headed back into the grasslands. Most of the birding was done on our road journey towards the desert, where small water bodies yielded common water birds like Egrets, Grebes, and Herons. Sightings of the Booted Eagle and Greater Hoopoe Lark were also made during this time.

Greater Hoopoe Lark (Photo: Umesh Mani)

The highlight of the day, though, was the sighting of the Merlin.

Merlin (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Following a peculiar encounter with a couple of Desert Foxes, we stopped to enjoy a beautiful desert sunset with a cup of hot tea.

On our way back we made a stop to see the Indian and Sykes's Nightjars that were sitting around on the roads. A productive day indeed!

Desert Fox (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Indian Nightjar (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Sunset at Banni Grasslands
(Photo: Prashant Yella)

Sykes's Nightjar (Photo: Umesh Mani)

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<u>Day-3: Mandvi, February 7, 2020</u>
Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao

A view of Mandvi Beach (Photo: Prashant Yella)

All that birdwatchers want on any trip, besides birds, is a bright and sunny morning – which all of us had rightly predicted a few hours prior to sunrise. It was a no-brainer as the waxing moon, nearing its full size, went down under our gaze in the western sky. While it was still dark, we set off to our destination, Mandvi Beach, which was around 100 km away from the homestay. The drive was pleasant and the time was well-utilized discussing ecology, geography and bird flight.

Demoiselle Crane (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Yellow-wattled Lapwing (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

On reaching the port town of Mandvi, we were welcomed by a flock of Demoiselle Cranes, Yellow-wattled Lapwings and Grey and Citrine Wagtails. There was a small marshy patch across the beach and we got to see a large number of wetland birds including the Western Reef Egret, varieties of Gulls, Egrets, Cormorants, Black-tailed Godwits, and Black-winged Stilts.

Western Reef Egret (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

Black-tailed Godwit (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

A Eurasian Marsh Harrier was seen hunting in the background. *En route* to the beach we were given a brief appearance by a pair of Nilgai.

Nilgai (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

We reached the beach in time for a sumptuous breakfast laid out by our good friends Bharat, Dinesh and Kishore. It was a mix of local cuisine, some fruit and the evergreen bread and jam. However, an Oriental Honey-buzzard sitting on a bush distracted and delayed us for a while.

Oriental Honey-buzzard
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Greater Flamingo immature (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

Greater Flamingo adult (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

We quickly moved on to the shoreline where we met some birdwatchers from the Western world. We bashed on regardless and achieved our objectives. The star attractions were the Greater Flamingos, Pied Avocets, Eurasian Oystercatchers and Crab-plovers.

Eurasian Oystercatcher & Pied Avocet (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Pied Avocet & Crab-plover (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

A mosaic of sea shells (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

We saw and recorded a number of Gulls and other waders, besides a lone Eurasian Curlew. On the return we saw a couple of camel carts used by the fishermen to lug their equipment and catch.

Eurasian Curlew (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Camel cart used for transporting man and material
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

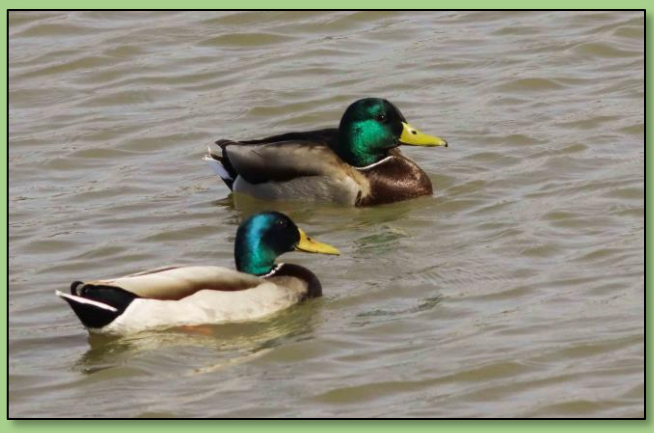
We moved back to the marshy patch next to the factory once again to witness an interesting aerial combat. We saw three Great White Pelicans descend towards the marsh. This was not liked by the incumbent self-declared ruler, the Black-necked Stork. It rapidly clattered its long mandibles, as if firing a volley of shots! The Pelicans, undeterred, continued their approach ignoring the warnings. The Stork, forced to demonstrate its interceptor skills, quickly flew up a few hundred feet and gave a painful jab to one of the members in the Pelican formation! The formation had to break loose and flee the battle zone. The Stork, having warded off the invaders, descended rapidly to resume its hunt. An exciting encounter!

Black-necked Stork chasing off Great White Pelican
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Black-headed Gull (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

Indian Cormorant (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

After lunch we went to a nearby tank in the city where we saw a number of Cormorants, Ibises, Lapwings, Ducks, Painted Storks and the Indian Softshell Turtle.



Mallard (Photo: Umesh Mani)

White Wagtail (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Indian Softshell Turtle (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Grey Heron (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

An hour later we drove to a nearby scrub forest patch and saw the Rufous-fronted Prinia, the White-naped Tit and the Marshall's Iora. We birders returned to our roost after a fruitful birding trip and were welcomed back with a hot dinner.

White-naped Tit (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Marshall's Iora
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

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Day-4: Chari Dhand, Great Rann of Kutch, February 8, 2020
Dr Barnali Chaudhuri

A dozen Deccan Birders visited Bhuj and the Great Rann of Kutch, both known for their rich wildlife and biodiversity. I was excited and looking forward to my first ever experience of desert birding.

After three days of excitement, we were ready to unfold Day-4. Our destination was Chari Dhand, 100km from our homestay in Lodai village, where the 2001 earthquake in Bhuj had originated from. We woke up around 4:00AM to the calls of Nightjars. It was still dark and the stars were twinkling. We observed the 'Seven Stars' constellation – Saptarshi – along with the North Star.

We enjoyed a hot cup of chai before starting off. Around 6:10AM, our convoy of three vehicles started for birding while it was still moonlight. The search lights of our vehicles illuminated the road ahead. The full moon spread its light as if guiding us towards our destination. As the time passed, the sun rose, overshadowing the moon. The land was aglow with the red light scattered by the sun.

Indian Peafowl (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Our convoy reached a vast landscape unbroken by any human construction. An Indian Peafowl sat on a tree. The dry riverbed was spectacular.

Dry riverbed with Aravali Mountains in the background
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Greater Spotted Eagle (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Steppe Eagle (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Long-legged Buzzard (Photo: Umesh Mani)

We observed a number of raptors – the Greater Spotted Eagle, Steppe Eagle, Eurasian Marsh Harrier, Long-legged Buzzard, etc. Alpine Swifts were seen in flight. Before I could take a picture, a Black-eared Kite replaced the Swifts. Several hundred Common Cranes were flying in their beautiful V formation. A pair of Yellow Wagtails was busy feeding.

Isabelline Shrike (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Yellow Wagtail (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

An Isabelline Shrike was flying from one tree to another. A Stoliczka's Bushchat was looking for prey. The highlight sighting among the raptors, though, was the Eastern Imperial Eagle.

Eastern Imperial Eagle (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Bharat, our tour guide, advised us not to linger too long as we had to reach our destination in the early hours if we wanted to see the rare Grey Hypocolius, a winter visitor from the remote areas of central Asia.

The big lake at Chari Dhand (Photo: Prashant Yella)

Grey Hypocolius (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Following his advice, we drove up toward the big lake, Chari Dhand. Bharat, who was on the lookout for the Grey Hypocolius, was finally able to locate it. We noticed a Rosy Starling quarreling with the Grey Hypocolius in a bid to secure its territory. Bharat told us to wait patiently. After a while we saw the Hypocolius without any disturbance from the Rosy Starling. I was thrilled to watch the bird feed on the little berries of *Salvadora persica*. After a while I saw a Bluethroat feeding in the field under the shade of a tree.

Bluethroat (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Far in the lake, hundreds of water birds were on display. Among them, Pelicans were distinctly visible. Soon, the second half of the raptor show began, giving us innumerable sightings.

We spotted a Golden Jackal looking towards us. Hundreds of Common Cranes were roosting in the valley of a nearby mountain range.

Common Crane (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Common Kestrel (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

After spotting a Common Kestrel on a tree, we headed towards a rocky area. A Red-tailed Wheatear was perched on the rocks and looking around, patiently posing for our photographers.

Red-tailed Wheatear (Photo: Umesh Mani)

A wonderful spread of *idli*, bread with butter and jam, bananas and tea awaited us on the hoods of our vehicles. After a sumptuous breakfast arranged by Bharat, we visited the natural rock formations on the Layari River Bed and saw a spectacular Eurasian Eagle Owl with prominent ear-tufts. After a while it flew from one side to the other and camouflaged perfectly with the rocky surroundings.

The rocks with the Eurasian Eagle Owl nest
(Photo: Prashant Yella)

Driving on, we came upon two Golden Jackals.

Layari River (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Rock formation *en route* to Moti Virani
(Photo: Prashant Yella)

A view *en route* to Moti Virani (Photo: Prashant Yella)

We stopped for lunch in a small village named Moti Virani around 12:45PM. The Centre for Desert and Ocean (CEDO) was totally different from other restaurants. I liked the quotations hanging on the walls – for instance, 'Sea water is the future', 'Photosynthesis is the answer to world problems', 'Butterflies are flying flowers, flowers are tethered Butterflies', etc. It was only when Shivam, the owner's son, explained about their activities that I realized that CEDO was not just a restaurant and homestay, but also did a lot of work in the fields of environment, ecology and social causes. That place had a soothing effect on our eyes as it was surrounded by many big trees. Shivam also explained about the trees and their uses. Behind the restaurant were teak trees (*Tecomella undulata*), locally known as Rohida, blooming with orange and red flowers.

Purple Sunbird male in eclipse plumage
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

I spotted a beautiful male Purple Sunbird in eclipse plumage enjoying nectar from those flowers. Rohida produces quality timber used for furniture. Shivam became emotional as he explained the medicinal power of Rohida and how the extract of the leaves had cured a dying leukemia patient. There were also Drumstick trees with beautiful flowers.

Ammonite fossil (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

After lunch Shivam was kind enough to show us their vast collection of fossils. Among them the fossilized sea shells, conches, *Pela carpilius* crab and the ammonites attracted my eyes. I suddenly realized that back in our village, we worshipped a fossil of ammonite in black stone as our Kuladevata (the God Narayana). Shivam also took us to the nursery near the restaurant. We saw several trees along with Rohida and Shami. He explained that an infusion of Shami leaves can be used as an astringent and a remedy for diarrhoea and dysentery, as the extract of the leaves can kill intestinal parasitic worms.

Drumstick flowers (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

After tea, we left the Centre at 3:15PM, for the second half of our birding. After driving for a while, Kishore stopped our vehicle to show us a pair of Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse in the open ground. I wondered how they survived in the most parched environment on earth. Later I came to know that they needed water only once in 24 hours. In fact, some of the species can live longer than 24 hours without water. Moreover, male Sandgrouse carry water for their little ones in their specially-built breast feathers, which can soak water like a sponge.

Meanwhile Bharat, who was in another vehicle, spotted the Indian Courser and informed us. We rushed to the spot to see the colourful bird. After enjoying the bird, we came across another pair of Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse.

Indian Courser (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

Grey Francolin (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

After a while, we saw a pair of Grey Francolins enjoying their food. It was very difficult to distinguish between male and female. We looked around for the Painted Sandgrouse, but sighted the third pair of the Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse instead. We also came across a Rufous-tailed Lark, a flock of Greater Short-toed Larks and some raptors.

Rufous-tailed Lark (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Greater Short-toed Lark (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Maldharis on their way home (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

As the sun went down, Common Cranes went back to their roosting area. Maldharis, a tribal community in Gujarat, were seen going back with their camels. We reached a water body where I noticed plenty of small ammonites scattered. We saw a Greater Flamingo along with six juveniles.

Sunset over the water body
(Photo: Prashant Yella)

The setting sun looked like a golden plate disappearing in the far horizon in the Great Rann of Kutch. There was not one cloud in the sky. The entire sky became reddish. The red colour demarcated the land from the sky and it was a spectacular sight. As time passed, the moon rose. Though the sun had set, there was enough light. In that dim light, we spotted a few Northern Shovelers.

Northern Shoveler (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

We reached the homestay by 8:30PM and enjoyed a delicious dinner. I thank Umesh for organizing the trip and Sudhir for coordinating. Bharat's guidance and timely, delicious food, made the trip unforgettable. I also thank all the team members for making this trip as a memorable one.

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Day-5: Banni Grasslands, Great Rann of Kutch, February 9, 2020

Prashant Yella

Growing up in a household of birders, I received my first guidebook at the age of nine. I remember being immediately drawn to the wide variety of Raptors and Owls that I had never seen or heard of. Over the past few days, I was finally able to witness some of these majestic birds in their habitat and happily, I can now tick some off my list. The excitement of finally seeing the Eurasian Eagle Owl (Bubo bubo) is something that I will cherish for a long time.

It was our last day of birding out in the Great Rann of Kutch. The energy levels in the camp were as high as Day One, even though the schedule for the day was not as jam-packed. Most visits were planned around a few local sites. At the break of dawn, all of us gathered around for some tea and a quick briefing. We headed into the grasslands in an attempt to spot the Bimaculated Lark (*Melanocorypha bimaculate*) amongst hundreds of Greater Short-toed Larks. However, it proved unfruitful. One of the other teams got a glimpse of the Macqueen's Bustard, but could not get a photograph. On the brighter side, sightings of the Short-eared Owl, Steppe Eagle and Montagu's Harrier were made before we got together for breakfast and a group photo session.

Short-eared Owl (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

Montagu's Harrier female (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

The group at Banni Grasslands (Photo courtesy: Prashant Yella)

Variable Wheatear (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

There was also an interesting bit of action when we saw a male Steppe Eagle chase a female off what seemed to be a preferred perch.

Steppe Eagle female (L) being displaced by male (R)
(Photo: Umesh Mani)

After breakfast, our main sightings consisted of Variable Wheatear, Asian Desert Warbler, Streaked Weaver, Green Bee-eater and Indian Silverbill. A Stoliczka's Bushchat gave an exhibition of its famous puff-and-roll display.

Stoliczka's Bushchat (Photo: Umesh Mani)

It was fascinating to see that our guides not only understood the ecosystems of the region really well, but also were well-versed in locating and identifying birds that were tricky to spot.

Desert Whitethroat (Photo: Umesh Mani)

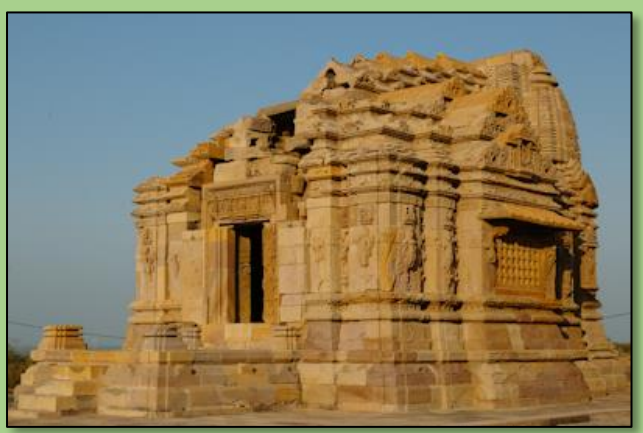
Some of us visited a temple of a local saint named Mekan Dada. Here we got a chance to interact with the residents of Lodai and learn a bit more about their history and culture before heading back for lunch.

Common Hoopoe (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

Later in the evening we headed out to a few more local spots for birding. Additions to our list were Common Babblers, Grey Francolins, Isabelline Wheatears and the Indian Courser.

Common Babbler (Photo: Umesh Mani)

The final stop for the day was a Sun temple where we saw Brown Rock Chats and Dusky Crag Martins.



Sun Temple (Photo: Prashant Yella)

Brown Rock Chat (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Sunset *en route* to Bhuj (Photo: Prashant Yella)

Finally, we headed back to Bhuj for some shopping and the traditional Gujarati thali, before commencing our overnight journey to Ahmedabad.

Today, as I look back at the photographs of the landscapes that I had captured, I feel immense gratitude to our guides who enthusiastically showed us a wide variety of locations with unique topographies. From canyon-like rock formations to still ponds and salt deposits in the desert, we were able to cover all the quintessential landscapes of Great Rann of Kutch.

Steppe Eagle (Photo: Umesh Mani)

* * *

Day-6: Thol Lake Bird Sanctuary, February 10, 2020

Sudipta Bhattacharya

On the way back from Great Rann of Kutch, two photography enthusiasts accompanied two ardent birders to Thol Lake. The day started with some refreshment at a sophisticated waiting room in the Ahmedabad Railway Station. This was a transit day from Bhuj to Hyderabad, and the trip to Thol was a sudden decision as our flights were in the evening, and we had reached Ahmedabad by the early morning.

It was a sunny day with clear sky. As soon as we reached Thol Lake Bird Sanctuary after a quick sip of tea, we were welcomed by a Eurasian Collared Dove and an Indian Palm Squirrel.

Eurasian Collared Dove (Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

Indian Palm Squirrel (Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

We went through a display explaining the background of the lake, and learnt that this lake was artificially established in the year 1912, with the objective of providing irrigation facilities to nearby farmers. This lake has the capacity to store about 84 million cubic meters of water, and is spread over an area of about 699 hectares of land. It is currently owned and operated by the Forests and Irrigation Departments of the Government of Gujarat.

While going around the lake we observed that the place had a combination of habitats – forest, scrub and wetland. Naturally, all kinds of birds were seen flying around, including winter migratory species.

There was a small water outlet surrounded by scrub as seen in the photograph below. This area had good activity.

Purple Heron (Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

Long-tailed Shrike
(Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

A Lesser Whitethroat was spotted immediately. A Long-tailed Shrike appeared suddenly for a short while, followed by a couple of Bluethroat engaging in a territorial dispute.

Bluethroat (Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

Ruddy Shelduck (Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

Knob-billed Duck
(Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

As soon as we climbed up the bund surrounding the lake the vast area of the lake was visible. A large number of migratory ducks were visible in the islands in the middle of the lake. Several Ruddy Shelducks, Knob-billed (or Comb) Ducks, Northern Shovelers, Northern Pintails etc. were visible.

The female of a Purple Sunbird was showing its flying tricks in front of us. A Green Bee-eater was taking a sunbath, and a Booted Warbler was foraging on ground as it usually does. Suddenly a Lesser Whitethroat appeared in front of us. A large number of Dusky Crag Martins were flying around.

Purple Sunbird female (Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

Booted Warbler (Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

Lesser Whitethroat (Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

Dusky Crag Martin (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Purple Sunbird male (Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

We all got to take some close shots of a Purple Sunbird in search of food. While going to the other side we saw a Black-eared Kite hovering over us.

Black-eared Kite (Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

Pied Kingfisher hovering (Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

The acrobatics in flight by the Pied Kingfisher was, as always, an interesting sight.

Red-breasted Flycatcher
(Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

Greater Spotted Eagle
(Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

While returning to our car we saw a Red-breasted Flycatcher and a Greater Spotted Eagle. A Great Egret flew over our head; I was happy at the chance to take a flight shot.

Great Egret (Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

Red-naped Ibis (Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

The Red-naped Ibis was also visible in the marshy lands beside the grassy areas. The Steppe Eagle was seen on the way back to the parking space.

Clamorous Reed Warbler
(Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

Near the parking, in the area where we had previously seen the Bluethroats, we observed Clamorous Reed Warblers having an argument. The day ended with a couple of common birds, the Red-vented Bulbul (*P. c. benghalensis* subspecies) and a vocal Indian Robin.

Red-vented Bulbul (Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

Indian Robin male (Photo: Sudipta Bhattacharya)

We had a late lunch, breaking our long exile from non-vegetarian food, then reached the Ahmedabad airport on time for a peaceful journey back home.

The list of birds seen during the trip is given below:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Nalsarovar	Thol	GRK (Banni Grasslands)	Mandvi	GRK (Chhari Dhand)	GRK (Banni Grasslands)	Thol
1	Alpine Swift	*Tachymarptis melba*					Y		Y
2	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*							Y
3	Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark	*Eremopterix griseus*				Y		Y	Y
4	Asian Desert Warbler	*Sylvia nana*						Y	
5	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopaceus*	Y			Y			
6	Asian Openbill	*Anastomus oscitans*	Y	Y					
7	Asian Palm Swift	*Cypsiurus balasiensis*	Y		Y				Y
8	Baillon's Crake	*Zapornia pusilla*	Y						
9	Bank Myna	*Acridotheres ginginianus*	Y						Y
10	Bar-headed Goose	*Anser indicus*		Y					

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Nalsarovar	Thol	GRK (Banni Grasslands)	Mandvi	GRK (Chhari Dhand)	GRK (Banni Grasslands)	Thol
11	Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*	Y		Y		Y		Y
12	Baya Weaver	*Ploceus philippinus*						Y	
13	Bay-backed Shrike	*Lanius vittatus*			Y		Y		
14	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y
15	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*	Y						Y
16	Black-eared Kite	*Milvus (migrans) lineatus*					Y		Y
17	Black-headed Gull	*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*				Y			
18	Black-headed Ibis	*Threskiornis melanocephalus*	Y	Y		Y			Y
19	Black-necked Stork	*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*				Y			
20	Black-tailed Godwit	*Limosa limosa*		Y		Y			
21	Black-winged Kite	*Elanus caeruleus*	Y						Y
22	Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y
23	Bluethroat	*Luscinia svecica*					Y		Y
24	Booted Eagle	*Hieraaetus pennatus*			Y				
25	Booted Warbler	*Iduna caligata*							Y
26	Brahminy Starling	*Sturnia pagodarum*	Y						Y
27	Brown Rock Chat	*Cercomela fusca*					Y	Y	
28	Brown Shrike	*Lanius cristatus*	Y						
29	Brown-headed Gull	*Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus*				Y			
30	Caspian Gull	*Larus cachinnans*				Y			
31	Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y
32	Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse	*Pterocles exustus*	Y				Y		
33	Chestnut-shouldered Petronia	*Gymnoris xanthocollis*					Y		
34	Citrine Wagtail	*Motacilla citreola*				Y			
35	Clamorous Reed Warbler	*Acrocephalus stentorius*	Y						Y
36	Collared Pratincole	*Glareola pratincola*	Y						
37	Common (Blue Rock) Pigeon	*Columba livia*	Y	Y			Y		Y
38	Common Babbler	*Turdoides caudata*	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y
39	Common Coot	*Fulica atra*		Y					
40	Common Crane	*Grus grus*					Y		Y
41	Common Hoopoe	*Upupa epops*		Y			Y		Y
42	Common Iora	*Aegithina tiphia*		Y					Y
43	Common Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	Y				Y		
44	Common Moorhen	*Gallinula chloropus*							Y
45	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*	Y	Y			Y		Y
46	Common Redshank	*Tringa totanus*			Y				
47	Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*	Y	Y	Y	Y			
48	Common Tailorbird	*Orthotomus sutorius*							Y
49	Common Teal	*Anas crecca*		Y					Y
50	Common Woodshrike	*Tephrodornis pondicerianus*				Y			

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Nalsarovar	Thol	GRK (Banni Grasslands)	Mandvi	GRK (Chhari Dhand)	GRK (Banni Grasslands)	Thol
51	Crab-plover	*Dromas ardeola*				Y			
52	Cream-colored Courser	*Cursorius cursor*			Y				
53	Crested Lark	*Galerida cristata*	Y		Y		Y		Y
54	Curlew Sandpiper	*Calidris ferruginea*	Y		Y				
55	Dalmatian Pelican	*Pelecanus crispus*				Y			
56	Darter	*Anhinga melanogaster*		Y					Y
57	Demoiselle Crane	*Grus virgo*	Y	Y		Y			
58	Desert Wheatear	*Oenanthe deserti*	Y		Y		Y		
59	Desert Whitethroat	*Sylvia (curruca) minula*						Y	
60	Dunlin	*Calidris alpina*	Y						
61	Dusky Crag Martin	*Ptyonoprogne concolor*						Y	Y
62	Eastern Imperial Eagle	*Aquila heliaca*					Y		
63	Eurasian Collared Dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*	Y	Y					Y
64	Eurasian Coot	*Fulica atra*			Y				Y
65	Eurasian Curlew	*Numenius arquata*				Y		Y	
66	Eurasian Eagle Owl	*Bubo bubo*					Y		
67	Eurasian Marsh Harrier	*Circus aeruginosus*	Y	Y		Y	Y		Y
68	Eurasian Oystercatcher	*Haematopus ostralegus*				Y			
69	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter nisus*	Y						
70	Eurasian Spoonbill	*Platalea leucorodia*		Y	Y				
71	Eurasian Wigeon	*Mareca penelope*							Y
72	Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*		Y					
73	Great Cormarant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*				Y	Y		
74	Great Egret	*Casmerodius albus*		Y			Y		Y
75	Great White Pelican	*Pelacanus onocrotalus*		Y		Y			
76	Greater Coucal	*Centropus sinensis*	Y	Y		Y			Y
77	Greater Crested Tern	*Thalasseus bergii*				Y			
78	Greater Flamingo	*Phoenicopterus roseus*		Y		Y	Y		
79	Greater Hoopoe Lark	*Alaemon alaudipes*			Y				
80	Greater Short-toed Lark	*Calandrella brachydactyla*			Y		Y	Y	
81	Greater Spotted Eagle	*Aquila clanga*					Y		Y
82	Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y
83	Grey Francolin	*Francolinus pondicerianus*	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
84	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*		Y	Y				Y
85	Grey Hypocolius	*Hypocolius ampelinus*					Y		
86	Grey Plover	*Pluvialis squatarola*				Y			
87	Grey Wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*		Y		Y			
88	Greylag Goose	*Anser anser*		Y					
89	Grey-necked Bunting	*Emberiza buchanani*			Y	Y			
90	Heuglin's Gull	*Larus heuglini*				Y			

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Nalsarovar	Thol	GRK (Banni Grasslands)	Mandvi	GRK (Chhari Dhand)	GRK (Banni Grasslands)	Thol
91	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*	Y	Y			Y		Y
92	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	
93	Indian Bushlark	*Mirafra erythroptera*				Y			
94	Indian Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*		Y					
95	Indian Courser	*Cursorius coromandelicus*					Y	Y	
96	Indian Jungle Crow	*Corvus (macrorhynchos) culminatus*							Y
97	Indian Nightjar	*Caprimulgus asiaticus*			Y				
98	Indian Peafowl	*Pavo cristatus*		Y			Y		
99	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y
100	Indian Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicatus*	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y
101	Indian Roller	*Coracias benghalensis*	Y						Y
102	Indian Silverbill	*Euodice malabarica*	Y		Y			Y	
103	Isabelline Shrike	*Lanius isabellinus*	Y				Y	Y	
104	Isabelline Wheatear	*Oenanthe isabellina*			Y			Y	
105	Jack Snipe	*Lymnocryptes minimus*			Y				
106	Jungle Babbler	*Turdoides striata*		Y					
107	Knob-billed Duck	*Sarkidiornis melanotos*		Y					Y
108	Laughing Dove	*Stigmatopelia senegalensis*	Y		Y				Y
109	Lesser Crested Tern	*Thalasseus bengalensis*				Y			
110	Lesser Whistling-duck	*Dendrocygna javanica*		Y					Y
111	Lesser Whitethroat	*Sylvia curruca*	Y						Y
112	Little Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax niger*	Y	Y					Y
113	Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*		Y	Y				Y
114	Little Ringed Plover	*Charadrius dubius*					Y		
115	Little Stint	*Calidris minuta*	Y		Y	Y			
116	Little Swift	*Apus affinis*							Y
117	Long-legged Buzzard	*Buteo rufinus*					Y		
118	Long-tailed Shrike	*Lanius schach*							Y
119	Macqueen's Bustard	*Chlamydotis macqueenii*						Y	
120	Mallard	*Anas platyrhynchos*				Y			Y
121	Marsh Sandpiper	*Tringa stagnatilis*			Y	Y			
122	Marshall's (or White-tailed) Iora	*Aegithina nigrolutea*				Y			
123	Merlin	*Falco columbarius*			Y				
124	Montagu's Harrier	*Circus pygargus*						Y	
125	Northern Pintail	*Anas acuta*		Y					Y
126	Northern Shoveler	*Anas clypeata*		Y		Y	Y		Y
127	Oriental Honey-buzzard	*Pernis ptilorhynchus*	Y		Y	Y			Y
128	Oriental Magpie Robin	*Copsychus saularis*	Y						Y
129	Orphean Warbler	*Sylvia hortensis*			Y				
130	Osprey	*Pandion haliaetus*		Y					

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Nalsarovar	Thol	GRK (Banni Grasslands)	Mandvi	GRK (Chhari Dhand)	GRK (Banni Grasslands)	Thol
131	Paddyfield Pipit	*Anthus rufulus*	Y			Y	Y	Y	
132	Painted Stork	*Mycteria leucocephala*	Y	Y		Y	Y		Y
133	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*							Y
134	Pallas's Gull	*Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus*				Y			
135	Pallid Harrier	*Circus macrourus*		Y	Y				
136	Pied Avocet	*Recurvirostra avosetta*				Y			
137	Pied Kingfisher	*Ceryle rudis*							Y
138	Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*		Y					
139	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y
140	Red Collared Dove	*Streptopelia tranquebarica*	Y		Y				
141	Red-breasted Flycatcher	*Ficedula parva*							Y
142	Red-naped Ibis	*Pseudibis papillosa*	Y	Y	Y				Y
143	Red-tailed Wheatear	*Oenanthe chrysopygia*					Y		
144	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*	Y	Y	Y				Y
145	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y
146	River Tern	*Sterna aurantia*		Y					Y
147	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*	Y	Y		Y			Y
148	Rosy Starling	*Pastor roseus*	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y
149	Ruddy Shelduck	*Tadorna ferruginea*		Y					Y
150	Ruddy-breasted Crake	*Zapornia fusca*	Y						
151	Ruff	*Calidris pugnax*				Y			
152	Rufous-fronted Prinia	*Prinia buchanani*				Y			
153	Rufous-tailed Lark	*Ammomanes phoenicura*					Y	Y	
154	Sarus Crane	*Antigone antigone*	Y						
155	Shikra	*Accipiter badius*	Y						
156	Short-eared Owl	*Asio flammeus*	Y					Y	
157	Siberian Stonechat	*Saxicola maurus*							Y
158	Small Minivet	*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*				Y			
159	Sociable Lapwing	*Vanellus gregarius*	Y						
160	Southern Grey Shrike	*Lanius meridionalis*	Y		Y				
161	Spot-billed Duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*	Y	Y		Y			Y
162	Spotted Crake	*Porzana porzana*	Y						
163	Spotted Dove	*Stigmatopelia chinensis*		Y					
164	Spotted Redshank	*Tringa erythropus*			Y				
165	Steppe Eagle	*Aquila nipalensis*					Y	Y	Y
166	Stoliczka's Bushchat	*Saxicola macrorhynchus*	Y				Y	Y	
167	Streaked Weaver	*Ploceus manyar*						Y	
168	Sykes's Nightjar	*Caprimulgus mahrattensis*			Y				
169	Variable Wheatear	*Oenanthe picata*					Y	Y	
170	Western Reef Egret	*Egretta gularis*		Y	Y	Y			

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Nalsarovar	Thol	GRK (Banni Grasslands)	Mandvi	GRK (Chhari Dhand)	GRK (Banni Grasslands)	Thol
171	Whiskered Tern	*Chlidonias hybrida*		Y					Y
172	White Wagtail	*Motacilla alba*				Y			
173	White-breasted Waterhen	*Amaurornis phoenicurus*	Y	Y	Y				Y
174	White-browed Wagtail	*Motacilla maderaspatensis*							Y
175	White-eared Bulbul	*Pycnonotus leucotis*	Y	Y			Y		Y
176	White-eyed Buzzard	*Butastur teesa*	Y						
177	White-naped Tit	*Parus nuchalis*				Y			
178	White-tailed Lapwing	*Vanellus leucurus*	Y						
179	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*	Y	Y			Y		
180	Wire-tailed Swallow	*Hirundo smithii*							Y
181	Wood Sandpiper	*Tringa glareola*	Y	Y					
182	Woolly-necked Stork	*Ciconia episcopus*	Y	Y					
183	Yellow Wagtail	*Motacilla flava*	Y				Y		Y
184	Yellow-billed Babbler	*Turdoides affinis*	Y						Y
185	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus malabaricus*		Y		Y			
186	Zitting Cisticola	*Cisticola juncidis*				Y			

Some other photos taken during the trip:

Spot-billed Duck (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Brahminy Starling (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

Crab-plover (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Purple Sunbird male in eclipse plumage
(Photo: Umesh Mani)

Painted Stork
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Green Bee-eater (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Red-vented Bulbul
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Common Teal & Indian Pond Heron
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Great White Pelican (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

Crested Lark (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Indian Pond Heron
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Oriental Honey-buzzard female
(Photo: Umesh Mani)

Crab-plover adult (L) & juvenile (R) (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Greater Crested Tern (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

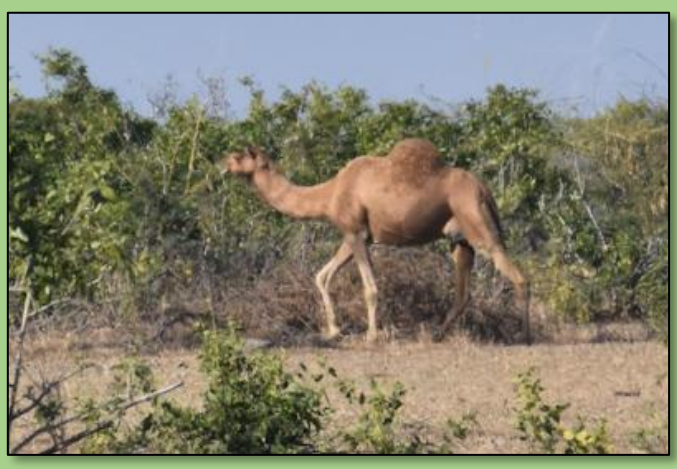
Spotted Owlet (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

Red-wattled Lapwing (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Black-necked Stork (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

House Sparrow female (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Stoliczka's Bushchat (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Camel (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Heuglin's Gull (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Rosy Starling (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Little Ringed Plover (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Mallard & Red-wattled Lapwing
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Painted Stork (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Red-naped Ibis (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

Laughing Dove (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Grey Francolin (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Rosy Starling juvenile (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Black-winged Stilt (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Woolly-necked Stork (Photo: G Ramakrishna Rao)

***

Cover photo credit: Short-eared Owl, by Umesh Mani

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